Rubber production

308. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of rubber production in the country for the last three years, year-wise;

(b) whether Government have recently lifted all restrictions for rubber imports;

(c) if so, the details of rubber imports during the last three years, year-wise;

(d) whether Government have felt the need to allocate special funds to help improve production in order to revive the rubber industry;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Production of natural rubber in the country during the last three years is given below:-

Year	Quantity (in tonnes)
2001-02	631,400
2002-03	649,435
2003-04	711,650

(b) Government has recently lifted the port restrictions on import of natural rubber.

(c) Import of rubber during the last three years is given below:

Year	Quantity (in tonnes)
2001-02	49,769
2002-03	26,217
2003-04	44,199

(d) and (e) The Government, through Rubber Board, is already implementing a number of plan schemes for the development of the rubber sector. These schemes provide for suitable financial/technical assistance to the growers, processors, exporters etc. for increasing production of natural rubber through expansion of area, enhancing the productivity, improving the quality of the produce to achieve competitiveness in the global markets, promoting agricultural and technological research in the interest of the industry, besides promoting export of this commodity.

(f) Does not arise.

Limestone export

309. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that limestone export from Rajasthan has been on a gradual decline due to Government's decision to reduce import duty and hike rail and ocean freight charges;

(b) if so, the details of limestone export during the last five years, year-wise; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take to revive limestone exports in the near future?

THE MINISTER TO STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) State-wise data on the export of limestone are not maintained by the Government. However, the export during the past five years for the country as a whole is given below:

(Value in Rs. Crores)

1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
24.35	10.06	11.90	11.89	15.99

[Soruce: DGCI&S]

(c) The Department of Commerce provides Market Development Assistance (MDA) for promotion of exports, for all products including limestone for participation in overseas trade fairs/exhibition and overseas publicity.

Indo-South Korea Trade Agreement

310. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether any trade agreement was signed between India and South Korea in October last when President of South Korea visited the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) to what extent the trade between the two countries is expected to increase as compared to the present level, indicating the new items proposed to be exported to and imported from that country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Package for tea and coffee industry

311. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to come out with a package for tea and coffee industry;